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**Testimony Filed with The Education Committee
Regarding Various Bills
March 3, 2021**

We submit comments on the following bills:

SB 886 AA Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education.

We are concerned with the proposed two-year delay in the ECS phase-in formula and that the reduction of ECS funds caused by this delay will be "back filled" by ESSER II funds. This approach delays the needed and expected adjustments to ECS and allocates ESSER II funds distributed for COVID relief to partially augment ECS. The ESSER II funds have very specific spending guidelines and do not support the overall education costs covered by ECS. Also, this approach creates a funding shortfall in the year following this biennial when the federal funds are no longer available.

We are also concerned of the continued capping of certain statutory grants. The excess cost grant, which helps support our neediest students, has been significantly underfunded for many years, while the costs of special education services has grown significantly. This combination of factors significantly compromises the ability of districts to provide adequate educational needs for all children.

HB 6535 AA Concerning Issues Relating to School Security Issues.

We support this bill and request that a member of CASBO also be included in the working group. Since our members are responsible for most aspects of school business and operations including security, facilities and safety we feel we can contribute real value and perspective to this working group.

SB 945 AA Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education.

We support this bill and ask that bill also include revisions to Section 10-51d (2) to allow regional school districts to deposit up to 2% of the annual district budget into a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures. This change inadvertently overlooked regional school districts in 2019 when the legislature increased the deposit amount to 2% for local board boards of education. Attempts were made last year to make this change but unfortunately COVID interrupted the process. We ask that the legislature correct this situation this session.

SB 947 AA Establishing a Working Group to Review the Effects of the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula on Small and Rural Towns.

We support this bill and request that a member of CASBO also be included in the working group. Our members are responsible for most aspects of school business and operations including a thorough understanding of ECS. We also have members from small and rural towns that understand the unique and special characteristics and challenges facing these towns. As a result, we feel we can contribute real value and perspective to this working group.

SB 948 AA Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut.

We support the changes to the ECS formula to allow school districts to meet the needs of many more communities and students and help students that don't have enough resources to allow them to succeed. We are pleased that the bill maintains the current ECS phase out schedule to allow districts facing declines in ECS funding to plan accordingly.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important matters.

About us: The Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) is a non-profit professional association that represents school business officials throughout the State of Connecticut. School business officials work closely with school boards, school superintendents, administrators, staff, public officials and communities; and we are responsible for most aspects of school business and operations. This includes, but is not limited to, overseeing food service programs.